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Today

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Remembering Vietnam's vets

Utah's planned Capitol monument could help heal hurtful memories, like those harbored by Larry Schultz

By Elaine Jarvik
Deseret News staff writer

IN THE LATE 1970s, almost a decade after he had returned from Vietnam, Larry Schultz worked as a bus driver. Sometimes, steering his Trailways down Parley's Canyon or along the interstate toward Ogden, he would suddenly get a feeling that the bus was a helicopter about to go down. He could hear the rocket fire all around him and he would hang on to the wheel for dear life.

In Vietnam Schultz had been in so many helicopter crashes that he seemed to be one of those cartoon characters who get flattened into the pavement and then pop back up good as new. Schultz survived 41 crashes during his four

trudging back from battle.

Schultz is glad the memorial is not heroic in an Iwo Jima Monument kind of way. "We don't need to glamorize and glorify the Vietnam War."

Dedication for the memorial had originally been planned for Veterans Day, but bureaucratic delays, plus the disappointingly slow rate at which funds have come in, have delayed construction. Dedication is now set for July 4, 1989.

When the names and the statue are finally erected, says Schultz, "The guys who came back can go there and cry and not feel they're the object of someone's ridicule or contempt. And they can talk to these guys again."

He can picture himself going up to the memorial early in the morning before anybody else is around. He can imagine



PHOTOGRAPHY/TOM SMART
Veteran Larry Schultz has been haunted by fearful memories in the years since he served in Vietnam. Above, he visits the State Capitol grounds, where a memorial is planned, shown in an artist's conception below.

tours in Vietnam, five of the crashes were so bad that everyone else on board was killed.

Early on, after several of these crashes, he concluded that the good die young and he must be about as bad as they come.

When he finally came home to his family's ranch in Colorado in 1970 it took him over a week to wash all the red Pleiku dirt from his body. But the guilt was ground in even deeper than that, although Schultz didn't know it at the time. It took several months for the flashbacks and the nightmares to begin, and it took more than 15 years after that for him to understand what they meant.

Now, in the fall of 1988, Larry Schultz is finally getting over Vietnam.

He has hopes that the Vietnam Memorial planned for Utah's State Capitol grounds will help him, and other soldiers like him, continue to heal — by facing the memory of those who did not return.

The memorial, says Schultz, will touch those senses that go beyond the basic five: the sense of loss and the sense of betrayal, and maybe, he hopes, "a sense of satisfaction, too."

The circular monument, which will be set into the hillside directly west of the Capitol, will contain four polished black marble slates inscribed with the names of Utah's 364 Vietnam war dead.

So far, the Vietnam Era Veterans Memorial Committee has raised \$110,000 — about half of the funds needed to begin and finish the memorial, which will also include a statue of a young soldier

hansen saying, "Gee, I'm sorry, Art and Ed and Don."

Schultz can remember most of their names — the guys he flew with and those he helped rescue while he served as a helicopter crew chief in the famed Dust-off Medivac unit. The four-member crews would fly in unarmed choppers into the jungle to gather up the wounded.

Schultz has slow-motion memories of his co-pilot being decapitated as he sat next to him. Of his medic sliced apart by chopper blades. Of a young soldier humming a lullaby as he cradled his severed leg in his arms. He can still see Dave Ganoe's helicopter, flying ahead of his own on an evacuation mission, exploding into the humid jungle air. Ganoe was scheduled to leave Vietnam the next day, to return to the States to see his wife and new baby.

Like little batteries that kept the war machine running, the soldiers who didn't make it would simply be replaced with new soldiers. New buddies who might be killed, too.

A couple of years ago Schultz went to see one of the recent spate of movies that have tried to recapture Vietnam on film. But he doesn't think he'll see any others. "Unless they can get the smells, and the fear that you feel in your throat, it's just a Hollywood fantasy."

Schultz broke nearly every major bone in his body during his four years in the war. Arthur Godfrey pinned the Purple Heart on him in an Army hospital on his 22nd birthday. He doesn't know why his buddies died and he lived.

"I think the answer is 'Because.' And



if you search deeper you'll find that the answer is 'Just because.'"

For the past two years, Schultz has been in one-on-one therapy at Salt Lake's Vietnam Veteran Outreach Program, where Dr. Lester Nielson and a staff of counselors help veterans who struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Nielson thinks the planned Vietnam

memorial will serve as a catharsis for many of these men and women. But he would prepare them before they visit the memorial, he says.

"Some of these guys aren't ready yet. They're afraid if they let their guard down at all they'll go to pieces."

Larry Schultz knows he can handle the Vietnam memorial when it's built.

But he has other limitations. When his 11-year-old son asked him to go to a haunted house this Halloween, Schultz had to refuse. He was afraid that the dead and mangled make-believe bodies would still seem too real.

■ Donations for Utah's Vietnam Veterans Memorial can be sent to the Vietnam Era Veterans Memorial Committee, P.O. Box 148, Provo, UT 84603.